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We claim:

1. In a computer system, a method of generating an application identifier for a software application, the method comprising:

5       applying an identifier generation algorithm to application data for the software application, the application data for the software application comprising graphical icon data for the software application; and

          generating an application identifier for the software application based on the  
applying of the identifier generation algorithm, the application identifier operable to  
10       distinguish the software application from other software applications on a computer system.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the identifier generation algorithm is a hashing algorithm.

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3 The method of claim 2 wherein the hashing algorithm is a one-way hashing algorithm.

4. The method of claim 2 wherein the application identifier is a 20-byte hash  
20       value.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the graphical icon data is obtained from an application binary.

25       6. The method of claim 1 wherein the graphical icon data is obtained from an icon file.

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7. The method of claim 1 further comprising comparing the application identifier with a list of application identifiers to determine an attribute of the software application.

5           8. The method of claim 7 wherein the attribute comprises a parental control rating for the software application.

9. The method of claim 1 further comprising sending the application identifier in a database query.

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10. The method of claim 9 wherein a database receives the database query, and wherein the database returns results indicating whether metadata relating to the software application can be obtained from a metadata service.

15           11. The method of claim 9 wherein a database receives the database query, and wherein the database returns results indicating whether the software application is of a particular application type.

20           12. The method of claim 1 wherein the application data further comprises a name of the software application.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the name is a name of an executable file.

25           14. The method of claim 1 wherein the application identifier is a unique fixed-length string.

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15. The method of claim 1 further comprising storing the application identifier in a data file along with one or more other application identifiers for other software applications.

5           16. The method of claim 1 wherein the applying of the identifier generation algorithm comprises using functions included in application programming interface.

17. The method of claim 1 wherein the application data further comprises registry data.

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18. The method of claim 1 wherein the software application is a gaming-related software application.

15           19. A computer-readable, program-carrying medium having carried thereon computer program code for performing the method of claim 1.

20. In a computer system, a method of generating an application identifier for a computer gaming-related software application, the method comprising:

20           applying a hashing algorithm to distinct application binary data for the gaming-related software application; and

            generating a hash value based on the applying of the hashing algorithm to the distinct application binary data, where the hash value is a unique game identifier for the gaming-related software application, the unique game identifier for use in displaying information associated with the gaming-related software application in a graphical user interface-based gaming activity center.

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21 The method of claim 20 wherein the hashing algorithm is a one-way hashing algorithm.

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22. The method of claim 20 wherein the graphical user interface-based gaming activity center is a feature of an operating system.

5           23. In a computer system, a method of querying a database using an application identifier, the method comprising:

          obtaining an application identifier for a software application, where the application identifier is a hash value generated by a hashing algorithm, the hash value based on distinct application binary data comprising graphical icon data for the software application;  
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          sending a query to the database, the query comprising application identifier information; and

          receiving a response to the query from the database.

15           24. The method of claim 23 wherein the database comprises a list of gaming-related software applications, and wherein the response to the query comprises an indicator of whether the software application is a gaming-related software application.

          25. The method of claim 23 wherein the query to the application database  
20           comprises a request for metadata relating to the software application, and wherein the response to the query comprises metadata relating to the software application.

          26. The method of claim 23 wherein the query to the application database  
          comprises a request for parental control information relating to the software application,  
25           and wherein the response to the query comprises parental control information relating to the software application.

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27. A computer system comprising:
- means for obtaining icon data for a software application;
  - means for creating an application fingerprint for the software application; the
- creating based on the obtained icon data for the software application, the creating
- 5 comprising applying a hashing algorithm to the obtained icon data.